VERMONT

Human Resources Investment Council 2004 Annual Report

The Human Resources Investment Council (HRIC) was established in State law in 1993. The mission of the Council is to advise the Governor on the coordination and alignment of workforce education and training services and programs and to ensure the development and implementation of a comprehensive, flexible and responsive workforce education and training system. The Council is designated as the State Workforce Investment Board under the Federal Workforce Investment Act. The purpose of this system is two-fold; to prepare Vermonters for good jobs, and to provide Vermont employers with a competitive advantage in the changing world economy.

The HRIC is a business majority council with members representing all sectors of the economy and all geographic regions of the State. In addition, Council membership includes top officials from State agencies and higher education, representatives of labor and the low-income community, and representatives of the Senate and House. The Council has developed and published a Strategic Workforce Development Plan that describes system-wide initiatives and activities designed to build a comprehensive, flexible, and responsive workforce education and training system. Vermont's Strategic Workforce Development Plan can be downloaded at www.hric.state.vt.us

The HRIC is charged in State law with establishing Regional Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs). These eleven regional volunteer boards are the local component of the system, working closely with employers, schools, colleges and community organizations to maximize the effectiveness of all of the State's workforce education and training investments.

2004 System Accomplishments:

• Information Technology Skills Taskforce – Working as a committee of the HRIC, the taskforce published a report in September that recommends 31 specific strategies that will respond to the growing shortage of workers who can meet the growing IT needs of a wide range of employers. The report highlights the excellent job opportunities and broader economic development potential of this technology.

WEB Address: www.hric.state.vt.us/council%20reports.html

- Health Care Workforce Development Committee The shortage of healthcare workers is a critical challenge for a wide range of healthcare providers. This HRIC committee will quantify these shortages and identify ways in which schools, colleges, and health care providers can respond. Under an agreement with the Agency of Human Services, the committee will also prepare the healthcare human resource plan required in Act 53.
- Increasing the Enrollment of Vermonters at the Northlands Job Corps Center Over the past year the percentage of Vermonters enrolled at the Center has increased to over 30%. In addition, the Council worked closely with the U.S. Department of Labor to develop a new set of Vermont-specific bid specifications for the new three-year contract to operate the Center that will be awarded in the spring of '05.
- Workforce Education and Training Fund Since July 1, 2003, more than 450 Vermonters have been trained for high skill/high wage jobs through this program administered by the Department of Employment and Training. As a result of feedback from employers and training providers, Mini Grants up to \$10,000 were offered for the first time, using a simplified application and a two-week turn-around. In FY 2004 the program funded twelve new public/private-training partnerships.

- Vermont Training Program The Vermont Training Program at the Department of Economic
 Development promotes and encourages the creation and retention of jobs in manufacturing by providing
 training for new and existing businesses. In 2004, 1,684 individuals completed training programs at 41
 companies, and two special programs in ISO 9000 and Lean Manufacturing.
- Single Statewide Adult Education and Literacy services In June of this year, the Department of Education awarded a single contract to Vermont Adult Learning to provide consistent adult education and literacy services in all regions of the State. This change was recommended by a Legislative study Committee established in 2000. Vermont is the First State in the Nation to provide uniform AEL services through a single statewide organization.
- Regional Technical Education Center Governance Utilizing legislation initiated by the Department of Education, and supported by the HRIC, voters in Addison and Chittenden Counties approved independent tech center governance boards in March of 2004. The new boards include broad representation of all communities in the region as well as employers.
- **Technical Education System Reform** Years of reform efforts at the regional technical centers are producing very positive results including a 50% increase in enrollments, improved performance on academic assessments, adoption of Industry Skill Standards in most programs, and increased rate of entry into postsecondary programs.
- Innovative Training Programs Continued implementation by the Department of Employment and Training of two multi-year Federal H1-B competitive grants that have trained over 1,600 individuals for highly skilled information technology and healthcare jobs. These grants total over four million dollars and have attracted more than seven million dollars in private sector matching funds.
- National Science Foundation Grant This year saw the beginning of the implementation of this \$600,000 grant by a partnership of the HRIC, Vermont State Colleges, and DOE that supports the development of a comprehensive new Information Technology program. The project supports the costs of professional development, a new course structure that will support more flexible IT degree requirements, and stronger connections between secondary and postsecondary IT programs.
- **Disabled Youth Career Start Grant** Award of \$2.5 million dollars over five years from U.S. DOL to a partnership of the HRIC and the Departments of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment and Training. The project will build local school/community/employer collaboratives that will address the poor academic performance and low rates of college and job entry of youth with disabilities. This year the program awarded four local multi-year grants and five local one-year pilot grants.
- Expanded Business Training Successful expansion of the Workforce Education and Training Initiative, a Vermont State Colleges/Regional Technical Center/Department of Employment and Training partnership that brought job training to 12,000 workers enrolled in Science, Math, CAD, Registered Apprenticeship, and other technical areas, from over 400 employers.
- Supporting Regional Workforce Leaders Convening 180 participants at the eighth annual Regional Workforce Investment Board conference, where regional teams learned key strategies for workforce development, and were provided with technical assistance workshops on a broad range of workforce issues.

Regional Workforce Investment Board Accomplishments:

This year, as part of the Career Start project, the WIBs organized 13 regional events attended by over 300 individuals who worked together to develop collaborative strategies to improve outcomes for youth with disabilities, including reduction in drop-out rates and increased entry into jobs and college. The WIBs have also begun organizing local events designed to increase job entry and improve job retention for offenders re-entering their communities.

The WIBs continue to work on specific employment sectors in their regions that are experiencing shortages of skilled workers, such as healthcare and information technology. In addition, the regional WIBs

played an important role in the implementation of the Workforce Education and Training Fund (WETF) and other training initiatives by developing partnerships between employers and providers in their regions, and by screening WETF applications to ensure that they respond to real skill shortages in each region.

Future Plans:

As the skill demands of the workplace continue to escalate, Vermont must be in a position to identify and respond to the education and training services needed by growing sectors of the economy. To this end, the Council will focus efforts on key demand areas such as health care, information technology and small business that require skilled workers to support their growth. The Regional WIBs are uniquely positioned to provide detailed and timely information about regional workforce needs and opportunities and to implement effective solutions. The Council will continue to seek resources for the Regional Workforce Investment Boards.

Plans for 2005:

- The Council will be introducing a "Workforce Challenge Statement" that describes the impact that the changing economy will have on the State's workers and employers, and that identifies key strategies for preparing our workforce to meet these challenges.
- Continued implementation of Vermont's Strategic Workforce Development Plan to guide the future
 development of the State's system of workforce education and training with a focus on job creation and
 supporting business competitiveness and growth.
- Continued utilization of the Workforce Education and Training (WET) Fund and Vermont Training Program as fast-response programs that help Vermonters prepare for good jobs, and that support business investments in the work force.
- Development of a pilot professional development program for the Career Resource Centers, Agency of Human Services and other WIB member organizations in the use of the Outcome/Logic model to guide continuous improvement efforts in partnership with the United Way and Community College.
- Implementation of the recommendations of the multi-agency/institution Workforce Education and Training Consortium to improve services and overall system effectiveness.
- Continued successful implementation of the Workforce Investment Act, including exceeding performance
 objectives in order to qualify for WIA Title V performance incentive grants, and the development of a
 new State Plan for implementation of the reauthorized Workforce Investment Act.
- Further expansion of Industry Recognized Skills Standards so that; education and training providers can
 develop curriculum that is clearly linked to employer expectations, worker skill gains are formally
 documented, and credentials can be transferred across institutions and workplaces.
- Continued support for implementation of the new broad-based governance structures for comprehensive Technical Education/Workforce Development Centers in partnership with the Department of Education.

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